



Final Evaluation Report - ISS Screening for VCA

Candidate Partner: Centre of Excellence in Alternative Care of Children (CEAC)

Country of Origin: India

Screening Period: 03.11.2025 – 22.12.2025

Report Submission Date: 30.01.26

Disclaimer:

This screening has been conducted by ISS on the basis of documentation and information provided by the candidate partner, complemented by publicly available sources and remote exchanges. While ISS has exercised due diligence in reviewing and, where feasible, verifying the information obtained, the present assessment does not constitute a comprehensive audit, investigation, or exhaustive evaluation of the organisation's or individual's capacities, activities, or overall performance.

As stressed in the Quality Manual and throughout this report, the scope of this screening is limited to assessing the candidate's suitability for the specific mandate envisaged by VCA. Accordingly, the findings and conclusions set out herein should be interpreted within these parameters and do not preclude the need for additional due diligence or ongoing assessment in the context of any future collaboration.

1. Executive Summary

- **Full Name:** Centre of Excellence in Alternative Care of Children (CEAC)
- **Main interviewee:** [REDACTED] (Founder and CEO)
- **Address:** A 65 Ground Floor, Sushant Lok-III, Sector-57, Gurgaon 122003, Haryana, India
- **Email:** [REDACTED]
- **Phone number:** [REDACTED]
- **Website & Social Media:** www.alternativecareindia.org
<https://www.facebook.com/alternativecareindia>
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/ceac-india/>
- **Description of the Main Activities:**
 - Foster Care: Providing foster families to children who are without parental care in collaboration with State governments in India and Sri Lanka.
 - Family Strengthening: Supporting vulnerable families in the community to avoid separation of children and their entry into childcare institutions.
 - Policy development: Assisting the government and non-governmental organisations in developing policies on foster care and sponsorship for effective implementation.
 - Research: Undertaking evidence-based research to strengthen and improve the current system, document the best practices, provide solutions to challenges and enhance knowledge in the community through informative, educational and communicative materials.
 - Trainings: Building the skills and capacities of stakeholders and implementers to effectively perform their duties at district level. Develop training modules for foster families, children and stakeholders.
 - Networks: Creating network of foster families and children to provide support to foster carers.
- **Primary Beneficiaries:** Children and foster families
- **Geographical Coverage:** India, consultancy work in Sri Lanka and Mauritius
- **Working Languages:** English and Hindi
- **Summary:** CEAC is an Indian charitable trust established in 2015, founded and led by Dr. [REDACTED] committed to improving the lives of vulnerable children, empowering youth and strengthening families. CEAC focuses on strengthening family-based and alternative care systems, particularly foster care, kinship care, and prevention of unnecessary family separation, while also supporting survivors of violence and vulnerable families. CEAC combines direct service delivery with systems strengthening, research, and policy advocacy, working closely with State governments and UNICEF across multiple states. While CEAC has extensive experience in child protection and alternative care, its direct experience in search for origins is limited.

2. Timeline

The candidate submitted a part of required documents on 2 December 2025, completed the surveys on 24 November 2025 and 11 December 2025. ISS did not receive a key stakeholder survey, despite having sent the survey to various contacts. ISS and the candidate met through Teams for online interviews on 16 December and 22 December 2025.

3. The Screening Results

3.1 Preliminary remark:

As three candidates from India are being screened for VCA, including one ad interim ISS member, the assessment has followed the screening framework particularly closely.

Cooperation between ISS and CEAC began in 2020 and has since focused primarily on cross-border casework and knowledge exchange. All cases involving CEAC are channeled through the ISS Asia Pacific Regional Office. Within this framework, CEAC provides support mainly in the areas of cross-border child protection, child abduction, and children on the move in India. The ISS network has until now not substantially collaborated with CEAC on SFO cases; however, CEAC is currently exploring potential partnerships globally to develop SFO services in India. The present screening is conducted independently by ISS and is strictly limited to the scope of this assessment.

3.2 Preliminary Screening Results (ISS NDT Unit)

- **Component 1: Structure & Integrity**

The overall score for this component is **4.36 (green)**.

CEAC demonstrates a well-established organisational structure with a clear legal mandate, articulated mission and vision, and documented governance mechanisms. The organisation is registered as a Charitable Trust under Article 64, formalised in December 2015. The Trust Deed consists of a charter and statutes that outline objectives, governance arrangements, trusteeship, and operational rules, providing a stable legal and institutional foundation. Governance and internal management structures are clearly defined. An organigram outlines roles and responsibilities across trustees, an advisory board, senior management, programme teams, HR, finance, and external consultants.

CEAC's mission ("to promote safety, permanency and wellbeing of children, youth and families") and vision ("safer and stronger families") are consistently reflected across its programmes, strategic objectives, and reported activities. The last three annual reports provide structured overviews of activities, initiatives, and beneficiary reach, clearly aligned with this mission and vision. In addition to direct service delivery, CEAC supports government agencies in promoting family-based care, notably through the implementation of foster care systems in Chhattisgarh and previously in Bihar. These activities further corroborate CEAC's stated commitment to de-institutionalisation and family strengthening.

The organisation demonstrates a strong rights-based and systems-oriented approach. Structural issues such as family separation, institutionalisation, gender-based violence, and socio-economic vulnerability are explicitly acknowledged and addressed through CEAC's intervention strategies. CEAC maintains a comprehensive internal policy framework, including child safeguarding, gender-based violence, POSH, whistle-blower mechanisms, ethics, and codes of conduct. These policies are reinforced by mandatory staff commitments and required trainings, particularly those mandated by UNICEF. While these policies are operational, they are not currently published on the

organisation's website. Internal conflict resolution procedures are managed initially through HR, with escalation to management or trustees if required. CEAC reported no major internal conflicts to date.

Feedback from beneficiaries is primarily collected through informal but regular mechanisms. Weekly 1.5-hour Friday sessions with foster care families provide a structured space for discussion of experiences, challenges, and concerns, including interactions with government systems. These discussions are used to inform programme adjustments, though no written feedback tools or formal grievance redressal mechanism for beneficiaries were shared.

CEAC demonstrates a strong advocacy and policy influence role, reporting engagement with more than eight States on the development and strengthening of alternative care policies, including foster care, adoption, kinship care, and sponsorship frameworks. Its advocacy efforts are closely linked to evidence generation and systems strengthening. In practice, CEAC works closely with stakeholders and practitioners to build capacity on de-institutionalisation, foster care, kinship care, and alternative care models. Intervention centres provide services to survivors of domestic violence, while research initiatives are undertaken to strengthen existing child protection systems. Preventive support to vulnerable families is also a core component, aimed at avoiding unnecessary family separation.

In terms of partnerships, CEAC maintains an established and ongoing collaboration with UNICEF through signed Programme Documents (PD) and works in close coordination with State governments. Outputs are reviewed annually and adapted through joint review processes involving UNICEF and government counterparts. While information on structured dialogue or partnership governance mechanisms was limited, the depth and continuity of collaboration indicate a mature institutional relationship.

No written references were provided, and no direct media coverage focusing solely on CEAC was submitted. Nonetheless, multiple organisations and news outlets (e.g. Hope and Homes for Children, Times of India, conference reports) reference CEAC alongside [REDACTED], highlighting its expertise and contributions to foster care and alternative care systems. An internet and social media review (Facebook and LinkedIn) did not reveal any reputational concerns or adverse findings.

- **Component 2: Operational & Financial Capacity**

The overall score for this component is **3.5 (orange)**.

CEAC's project implementation reflects a clear organisational strategy that is closely aligned with its human rights-based mandate and identified community needs. All programmes are developed in response to current priorities, particularly in the area of child protection and alternative care. Activities focus on strengthening foster care systems, preventing unnecessary family separation, supporting survivors of violence, and improving systemic responses to child vulnerability. This alignment between strategy, implementation, and community-level needs is evident across CEAC's programs and annual reporting.

Monitoring and evaluation are embedded within project design and implementation. Review and monitoring mechanisms are included in project proposals and are implemented through regular coordination and review meetings with UNICEF and relevant State government counterparts. CEAC demonstrates the ability to adapt programming based on evidence and learning. A concrete example is the foster care

programme where a disruption rate of 35% triggered a targeted study to analyse root causes. Findings from this evaluation informed the introduction of 20 hours of structured mandatory training for foster families, which subsequently reduced the disruption rate to 15%. This illustrates both functional evaluation practices and effective adaptive management, even though monitoring tools are primarily project-specific rather than organisation-wide.

Project implementation benefits significantly from internal and external consultation and interdisciplinary collaboration. CEAC regularly engages with State government departments, child protection authorities, social welfare officials, and UNICEF technical staff. External consultants are hired when specialised expertise is required, such as for surveys, research studies, or communication and social media outputs. Internally, programme implementation involves coordination across programme, monitoring, finance, and management functions, ensuring cross-functional input into decision-making and implementation adjustments.

Resources are planned and allocated in line with agreed project outcomes. Annual budgets are prepared and presented to the Board of Trustees and Advisory Board for approval. Financial allocation is outcome-oriented, with flexibility to reallocate funds during project cycles when State government requirements necessitate adjustments. Financial data from the most recent annual report indicates a strong focus on program delivery, with 76% of expenditure allocated to projects. The organisation maintains audited financial statements prepared by a qualified and certified chartered accountant and operates under a documented financial policy. Annual financial reports, including profit and loss statements and balance sheets, are prepared and presented to the Board of Trustees. CEAC is tax-exempt. Financial sustainability, however, remains moderately constrained. CEAC relies primarily on UNICEF as its main institutional funder, with limited supplementary income from individual donors.

CEAC demonstrates strong local linguistic and cultural fluency. Staff are predominantly recruited from the local communities in which programmes are implemented, ensuring shared language, cultural understanding, and social legitimacy with beneficiaries. This is considered a deliberate organisational strategy to enhance trust, acceptance, and program effectiveness in a linguistically and culturally diverse environment. Further recruitment criteria for programme staff are clearly articulated, with a minimum requirement of a master's in social work (MSW) and 4-7 years of relevant experience in child protection. Safeguarding and integrity measures are well established. CEAC practices criminal background checks through mandatory affidavits confirming that no criminal proceedings are pending against staff members.

To conduct SFO, an additional staff member within CEAC would coordinate and carry out the root searches together with [REDACTED]. This could be a former team member or another individual with relevant experience in this field. Depending on the specific needs of Flemish adoptees, CEAC would then identify individuals in the relevant geographical regions to conduct local searches. CEAC developed a well-documented and transparent fee structure for services provided to adult adoptees. Two main service options are offered: the first provides guidance and support, including orientation on how to access records, contact relevant officials, and coordinate visits, with the adoptee conducting the search independently for 400 EUR. The second option provides comprehensive support in conducting the search, including strategic planning and consultation with senior professionals, field enquiries and verification by social workers or consultants, legal assistance for obtaining official documents, travel and accommodation for staff,

counselling and psychosocial support for adoptees and biological families, and preparation of detailed case reports. Fees are clearly outlined per service component and will be applied consistently.

- ISS NDT Unit recommends **continuing** with the technical screening.

3.3 Technical Screening Results (ISS IRC Unit)

- **Component 3: Knowledge on children's rights, child protection, including adoption**
The overall score for component 3 is 4.38 (rounded to the second decimal point). The candidate organisation has demonstrated expertise in the fields of child protection and alternative care, both in its legal development, as well as its implementation and actors involved. The candidate organisation is acquainted with the domestic and intercountry adoption system, how it has developed throughout the years as well as the current search for origins framework and possible avenues for past ICA cases. Overall, the candidate organisation's knowledge is considered one of the main strengths.
- **Component 4: Technical capacity**
The overall score for component 4 is 2.91 (rounded to the second decimal point). The candidate organisation has extensive experience in child protection, alternative care, especially in terms of foster care, and to a lesser extent with other vulnerable subjects of rights, through their work with local communities and families. For instance, the candidate organisation is currently managing a foster care pilot programme in State of Chhattisgarh and has developed guiding tools for both foster carers and practitioners (see [here](#)). The candidate organisation has limited experience carrying out search for origin work. Despite being acquainted with the system and possible avenues for past adoption cases, they have carried out few cases that they did not manage to conclude due to financial and procedural constraints (including the third-party prohibition foreseen by the 2022 Adoption Guidelines).
- **Component 5: Collaboration**
The overall score for component 5 is 3.6 (rounded to the second decimal point). The candidate organisation is well-connected throughout different areas, with strong links institutionally among CARA and SARA, as well with other State organs. In their work they support District Child Protection Units. Moreover, CEAC works with UNICEF and has regular contact with judges that they train twice a year on family strengthening aspects.
- **Component 6: Independence from intercountry and domestic adoption**
The overall score for component 6 is 4.33 (rounded to the second decimal point). The trustee of CEAC, [REDACTED], has been a member of a Child Welfare Committee (CWC) in Delhi, between February 2015 and April 2016, a body responsible for decisions concerning children in need of care and protection, including placement in SAAs, CCIs as well as declaring a child legally free for adoption. However, this engagement has been over 10 years ago, and CEAC has been founded *a posteriori*, so the current independence from an organisational perspective is guaranteed.
- **Overall score for the technical screening**
The overall score for the four components is **3.77** (rounded to the second decimal point). It is worth reiterating here that this score reflects a specific screening on administrative investigation capacity and is not intended as an overall assessment of the candidates' suitability, but rather one element to consider.

4. Contextual and qualitative evaluation summary

Summary of the contextual and qualitative evaluation

India presents a complex legal and social context which, despite significant legislative reforms in recent years, continues to pose challenges to the effective protection of children's rights. While policies have strengthened access to family-based care, institutionalisation remains the predominant response in practice. Although the current system emphasises inter-institutional cooperation to safeguard children's fundamental rights, persistent structural constraints—such as limited access to funding for NGOs (which play a vital role in law implementation and social development), complex regulatory frameworks and shortages of skilled human resources—further exacerbate these challenges.

The implementation of adoption laws also remains deficient due to resource limitations, insufficient training, and gaps in coordination between adoption agencies and Child Care Institutions (CCIs). Adoption in India has a long history and, until relatively recent times, adoption as a legal concept was available only to members of the Hindu community under the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act of 1956 ([HAMA](#)). Under this legal provision, direct arrangements were made—either before or after the child's birth—between the birth and adoptive families, who often knew each other personally. This legal framework, however, did not apply to other groups, such as Muslims, Christians, and Parsis, who did not recognise adoption and therefore had to resort to guardianship under the [Guardians and Wards Act of 1890](#). As a result of the industrial revolution, adoption began to be recognised also under English law. England passed the [Adoption of Children Act of 1926](#), which required the consent of both biological and adoptive parents and granted adopted children the same rights, duties, liabilities, and obligations as biological children, except for inheritance rights. Residential care facilities were established, alongside the expansion of both domestic and ICA, with the latter recognised since the 1960s. Over time, the Adoption of Children Act 1926 has been superseded by modern law, such as the [Juvenile Justice Act 2000](#) (amended in 2015 and 2021), complemented with the currently applicable [Adoption Regulations 2022](#). HAMA adoptions are, however, still taking place, and recent reforms have sought to address the limited safeguards associated with these adoptions.

Despite being one of the major countries of origin for ICA with a longstanding tradition, access to adoption-related information remains constrained, largely due to social stigma surrounding infertility, unwed motherhood, and child abandonment. This has contributed to a preference for closed adoptions and limited disclosure of origins, as reflected in legal provisions that restrict access to biological information when anonymity has been requested at the time of surrender and, in some cases, reaffirmed by birth parents. In this complex legal context, carrying out SFO work proves extremely challenging and limited for any partner, given that the search is prohibited for third parties besides Authorised Foreign Adoption Agency, the Central Adoption authority (CARA), the Indian diplomatic mission, State Adoption Resource Agency (SARA), District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), and Specialised Adoption Agency (SAA). Considering these limitations, it is not surprising that information may often be obtained outside formal procedures. Adding a further layer of complexity to SFO processes, it is widely [reported](#) that obtaining and maintaining FCRA registration in India has become increasingly challenging. As a result, restrictions on access to foreign funding also limit the ability to carry out SFO-related activities by a local partner in case of requests coming from outside of India. In recent years, concerns have also been raised regarding past illicit adoption practices, Investigations published by Switzerland in [2023](#) and [2025](#) documented widespread illegal adoptions involving children

from India between the 1970s and early 2000s, highlighting practices such as child trafficking, forged documentation, and the absence or invalidity of biological parents' consent.

In this context—characterised by significant social inequalities linked to the caste system, widespread gender-based violence (in 2025, India ranked 131st globally, performing poorly relative to most other countries in closing gender gaps), and infrastructural limitations, particularly in remote and rural areas—operating effectively remains highly challenging, even for competent authorities. Based on a Right to Information request submitted to the Indian government in early 2025, CARA reported having received 40 SFO requests, none of which could be successfully addressed. Within these constraints, the candidate has demonstrated a strong understanding of the structural and social limitations of the Indian context and has developed a pragmatic methodology to navigate these challenges and provide meaningful support to adoptees.

Qualitative evaluation and interviews

This evaluation is based on a review of the organisational documentation submitted by CEAC, as well as surveys, complemented by basic web-based due diligence, and two in-depth interviews conducted with the organisation's trustee, [REDACTED], as its primary representative. As the interviews and substantive exchanges took place directly with [REDACTED], this assessment will make some remarks regarding her work as well.

The candidate organisation demonstrates detailed expertise in the fields of child protection and alternative care, with a particular focus on foster care. During the interviews, [REDACTED] showed a strong understanding of the legislation, implementation, actors, and challenges related to child protection and alternative care in India, reflecting long-standing engagement in this field.

Moreover, the organisation has been involved in foster care advocacy and capacity building efforts, that contributed to the inclusion of foster care in the Juvenil Justice Act in 2015. During this time, [REDACTED] also served as a member of a Child Welfare Committee (CWC) in Delhi, a body responsible for decisions concerning children in need of care and protection. Since then, CEAC has focused on implementation, training, and system development in the field of foster care. The organisation started focusing on training a wide range of stakeholders, including Child Welfare Committees, District Child Protection Units, judiciary members, police officers, and child protection professionals. In collaboration with UNICEF, they support the implementation of foster care programmes at state level, notably in Bihar (from 2019) and Chhattisgarh (from 2022). In addition to implementation, CEAC has contributed to the draft of a User Guide on Foster Care for the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, aimed at operationalising the “how” of foster care implementation, and they are regularly involved in consultation processes with government entities, such as CARA and National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development, providing training on alternative care, family strengthening, and kinship care.

Regarding adoption, the candidate organisation demonstrates a detailed understanding of the legislative framework and procedures and maintains ongoing engagement with CARA and other national bodies, which includes having provided suggestions to CARA on the adoption regulation, specifically for foster care. Moreover, during the interviews, [REDACTED] was able to clearly

explain the different routes through which search for origins may be pursued, depending on the cases and the authorities holding the relevant records. At the same time, she shows awareness of the structural and historical factors that complicate such searches.

Despite the extensive experience in child protection and alternative care, CEAC's experience in search for origins is limited. [REDACTED] explained that they have received several requests for search for origins and indicated that she provided information on the process and supported administrative searches and retrieval of documents, but that these did not lead to family reunions, although she is interested in exploring this option. The main constraints identified were the lack of dedicated financial resources, and the absence of formal authorisation to act on behalf of adoptees within the Indian adoption system, due to procedural barriers that prevent third parties from directly accessing adoption files held by CARA, SARA, SAAs or other state-level authorities. As a result, previous attempts to support search for origins relied primarily on informal information-gathering and advocacy-oriented approaches and did not lead to confirmed identification of biological families. It is recommended that VCA further discusses with CEAC the challenges encountered and the conditions under which these could be addressed within a potential VCA mandate.

When asked how CEAC would envision carrying out search for origin cases under a potential VCA mandate, [REDACTED] outlined a prospective operation model. This would involve recruiting an additional staff member in the CEAC office, who would coordinate and carry out the root searches, under the coordination of [REDACTED], this could be a former team member or another individual with relevant experience in this field. Additionally, depending on the specific needs of Flemish adoptees, search activities could be supported by locally based consultants or professionals who have contextual knowledge and language skills relevant to specific cases in the relevant geographical regions, coordinated by a central focal point within the organisation [REDACTED], assuring that searches can be carried out across India. [REDACTED] expressed confidence that these capacities could be developed and emphasised that effective search for origins in India depends heavily on long-term relationship-building, discretion, and goodwill with a wide range of stakeholders, rather than solely on formal procedures, and that her contacts would therefore be very useful.

CEAC collaborates regularly with central and state-level authorities, including CARA, SARAs, Child Welfare Committees, District Child Protection Units, and judicial actors, and frequently contributes to training initiatives and capacity-building initiatives. In addition, the candidate reports maintaining working relationships with civil society organisations and international actors, including UNICEF. During the interview, [REDACTED] emphasised that these collaborations can constitute relevant entry points for engagement on adoption-related matters and, potentially, search for origins, and that she has a particular close relationship with courts, where she can get certified copies of adoption decisions and annexed documentation easily.

When discussing methods that the candidate organisation would use to carry out search for origins during the interview, [REDACTED] referred to both official and parallel routes. The official route would entail adoptees submitting a formal request to CARA, which would in return carry out the search. In addition, she described parallel routes as e.g. attempts at document

retrieval and oral inquiry strategies, such as speaking with local community or faith leaders, as well as the use of public notices in newspapers. The candidate indicated that, in practice, a combination of both approaches should be pursued.

The organisation also referred to public appeals and the possible engagement of detective agencies as additional options in exceptional circumstances, but public appeals would not be preferable as they take a long time. Regarding the use of DNA tests, [REDACTED] explained in the second interview that DNA testing is not commonly used in India, but that she is open to learn about its use. How such tests might and should be handled, including questions on consent, reliability of test results, practical feasibility, costs, etc., will need to be further explored between VCA and the candidate organisation.

The candidate organisation has clear written internal policies, such as a Child Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct & Ethics, Financial Policy, a Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy. Moreover, during the interviews [REDACTED] demonstrated a critical understanding of the potential conflict between the adoptee's right to identity and the circumstances and rights of biological family members. She recognises the adoptee's wish to information about their origins, while also emphasising that the social, legal, and cultural realities in India can significantly constrain how this is realised in practice.

Within the organisation's foster care programmes, the candidate maintains close and regular contact with beneficiaries, including weekly meetings aimed at gathering feedback. In the context of a potential VCA collaboration on search for origins, however, the candidate indicated a preference for communication with adoptees to be channelled primarily through VCA, particularly during the investigative phases. At the same time, she expressed openness to being directly involved in family reunions or moments of contact, should these occur.

Following some requests and explanations, the candidate organisation provided a structured fee overview distinguishing between two possible modalities of engagement. Option 1 concerns guidance and advisory support only (EUR 400), whereby the organisation provides strategic guidance, contact details of officials to get information, and procedural orientation, while the adoptee conducts the search independently. Option 2 concerns direct involvement in search for origins activities and includes a detailed breakdown of potential cost components. The proposed costs per search for origins case include professional and case management fees, travel and subsistence, legal and administrative expenses, field inquiry and verification, documentation and reporting, and optional psychosocial support. Costs are case-dependent and vary according to location and complexity, with higher costs anticipated for rural searches and extended fieldwork. CEAC expressed flexibility and openness to discuss these fees with VCA if the mandate is secured.

Nevertheless, while the organisation expressed confidence that its capacity to carry out search for origins could be developed if adequate resources and formal support were secured, this capacity remains prospective at the time of the evaluation. CEAC does not currently have dedicated staff, standard operating procedures, or an established operational framework specifically designed for search for origins work, nor does it have a demonstrated organisational track record of independently carrying out such cases to completion. The envisaged model relies

on future recruitment, the engagement of external consultants, and the integration of search for origins activities into existing professional networks with CARA, SARAs, courts, and civil society actors. As a result, the scope of this evaluation was necessarily limited to the organisation's stated intentions, contextual knowledge, and prior exploratory involvement in search for origins, and the effectiveness of the established methodologies, staff competencies, or operational outcomes could not be assessed.

Moreover, at the time of the evaluation, CEAC did not hold an approved Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) registration and is therefore not authorised to receive foreign funding in India. [REDACTED] indicated that a pending application is ongoing since February 2025 with major verification stages finalised. CEAC is currently waiting for final decision. Until such approval is obtained, this regulatory constraint may limit CEAC's ability to formally engage in externally funded activities or projects that rely on international financial support, including potential collaboration under a VCA mandate.

Finally, the evaluation process required a degree of flexibility with regard to timelines, as several requested submissions were received following follow-up and adjusted deadlines, partly due to professional travel commitments. After clarification of the purpose and rationale of the screening framework, the candidate organisation participated actively and constructively in the interviews.

5. Final ISS Observations & Recommendation

Main strengths:

- The candidate organisation possesses extensive knowledge in child protection and alternative care, with a particular focus on foster care, supported by long-standing engagement in advocacy, training, and system development in India. Likewise, the organisation has in-depth knowledge of relevant legal and institutional frameworks, including the Juvenile Justice Act, foster care regulations, and the adoption system, as well as the respective roles of CARA, SARAs, CWCs, state-level authorities, SAAs and CCIs.
- The candidate organisation has established professional networks at central and state levels, including working relationships with CARA, SARAs, courts, Child Welfare Committees, civil society organisations, and international actors such as UNICEF.
- The candidate organisation has clear awareness of ethical considerations related to adoption and search for origins, including the balance between adoptees' right to identity and the rights and circumstances of biological family members.
- The candidate organisation has a strong organisational foundation with safeguarding procedures, including a Child Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct and Ethics, Financial Policy, and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy.
- Finally, the organisation has experience in maintaining structured contact with beneficiaries within foster care programmes and openness to coordination with VCA regarding communication with adoptees.

Limitations to consider:

- CEAC does not currently have an established function, dedicated staff, standard operating procedures, or a formal case management system for search for origins cases.
- Although the candidate organisation has a vision of how search for origin cases could be structured, proposed future arrangements (recruitment, consultants, integration into networks) are prospective, and their timelines, effectiveness, and sustainability remain uncertain. As a result, the evaluation could only assess stated intentions, contextual knowledge, and previous minimal involvement.
- The organisation currently does not hold an approved FCRA registration, which constrains its ability to receive foreign funding for externally supported projects.
- In light of the current unclear Indian legal framework and requirements, specifically the provisions of the Adoption Regulation, it is CEAC's understanding that the organisation would not have formal authorisation to act on behalf of adoptees within the Indian adoption system, limiting access to adoption records held by CARA, SARAs, state-level authorities and mainly SAAs.
- For any potential engagement with VCA, detailed protocols would be required to define CEAC's responsibilities, lines of communication with adoptees, and coordination with relevant authorities, including how investigative and advisory roles would be shared.

Considerations for selection by VCA:

- The candidate organisation presents a profile with strong potential to carry out SFO work, particularly due to its expertise in child protection, foster care, and adoption systems, as well as its solid understanding of the legal and institutional context in India, and its existing networks and policy-level engagement that represent important assets.
- However, the candidate organisation would still need to develop SFO as a fully operational function within the organisation, including the establishment of dedicated structures, resources, and capacities to support systematic casework.
- The candidate organisation has outlined an appropriate prospective model involving dedicated staffing and the use of locally based consultants, but this approach remains untested and would require further development, formalisation, and support to ensure consistent, case-based SFO service delivery aligned with VCA requirements.
- Legal and regulatory constraints, such as the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) approval and the authorisation to access records and act on behalf of adoptees, would need to be carefully assessed and addressed prior to any collaboration.